

Rules for Avoiding Comma Splices and Fused Sentences

Two common errors in writing are **fused sentences** and **comma splices**.

A **fused sentence** is really two sentences joined with no punctuation.

Example: Tiger Woods began playing golf at an early age he is now the world's greatest golfer.

This sentence should be divided between the words **age** and **he**. Some students try to correct the error by putting a comma between these two words. But a comma alone cannot correct a fused sentence. It creates another sentence error, the comma splice.

A **comma splice** is two sentences joined with a comma and no conjunction.

Example: Tiger Woods began playing golf at an early age, he is now the world's greatest golfer.

A comma splice is incorrect because two sentences cannot be joined with a comma alone. They must be separated by something stronger.

There are five ways to correct a fused sentence or a comma splice.

1. Use a period and a capital letter to separate the two sentences.

Tiger Woods began playing golf at an early age. He is now the world's greatest golfer.

2. Use a semicolon to separate.

Tiger Woods began playing golf at an early age; he is now the world's greatest golfer.

3. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction: *and, but, or, nor, for, so, and yet*.

Tiger Woods began playing golf at an early age, **and** he is now the world's greatest golfer.

4. Use a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb. The most common conjunctive adverbs are listed below. (When a conjunctive adverb joins two sentences, use a semicolon before it and a comma after it.)

however	in fact
therefore	moreover
consequently	nevertheless
then	thus

Tiger Woods began playing golf at an early age; **therefore**, he is now a great golfer.

5. Make the two sentences into one sentence with a subordinating conjunction. The most common subordinating conjunctions are listed below.

after	since	when
although	so that	whenever
as	than	where
because	though	wherever
before	unless	while
if	until	

When a subordinating conjunction begins a sentence, use a comma to connect the two clauses. Otherwise, use no comma.

Because Tiger Woods began playing golf at an early age, he is now a great golfer.

Tiger Woods is now a great golfer because he began playing golf at an early age.